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Precepts for the Performance Standards Board (PSB)

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 463

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PRECEPTS FOR THE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS BOARD (PSB)

Effective May 2015

A. PURPOSE

These Precepts prescribe the criteria to be used by the Performance Standards Board (PSB) for determining whether an employee is meeting the standards of his/her class.

B. GENERAL

The current Annual Evaluation Form (AEF) must be the sole source of information upon which the PSB bases its decision. The PSB considers a Performance Board's reasons for the referral, but independently assesses whether the employee is meeting the standards of his or her class. To determine whether the employee is meeting the standards of his or her class, the PSB makes two determinations. It must find whether the employee met his or her work objectives and whether the employee is meeting the skills standards for his or her class. The PSB uses the FS Skills Matrix or SFS Skills Model, as appropriate, to determine whether the employee is meeting the skills standards.

C. EQUALITY OF CONSIDERATION

The PSB evaluates all employees solely on merit with complete fairness and justice. In this respect, the PSB must not discriminate against any employee, directly or indirectly, for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, age, disabling condition, sexual orientation, origin or means of entry into the Agency. In addition, the PSB should be sensitive to discrimination information or the appearance of discrimination in AEFs and to report such findings to the Director, Office of Human Capital and Talent Management/Center for Performance Excellence (HCTM/CPE). If a Board member believes that another Board member is being unfair or biased in his or her review of an employee's Performance Evaluation File, the member must bring the matter to the Director, HCTM/CPE for appropriate action.

The PSB is to ignore inadmissible comments made in the AEFs or Employee Statements. Such inadmissible comments are not to be discussed nor used as the basis for decision-making. Inadmissible comments include the following:

1. References to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, reprisal for prior EEO activity, marital status, parental status, political affiliation or any other non-merit factor. (NOTE – References to a specific group in the context of promoting diversity are also prohibited.)

2. Retirement, resignation, or other separation plans;
3. References to grievances, references to third party adjudicatory proceedings or decisions, involvement in Equal Employment Opportunity complaints, or references to discriminatory practices.
4. Method of entry into the Service, e.g., conversion from another personnel system. (Mention of entry as International Development Interns (IDIs), New Entry Professionals (NEPs), Development Leadership Initiative (DLI), or Career Candidate Corps (C3) employees is permitted);
5. Reference to private U.S. citizens by name;
6. Negative references to participation or non-participation in union activities, either as a representative of the union or as a bargaining unit member;
7. Prior evaluations prepared by other Rating Officials;
8. Reluctance to work voluntary overtime;
9. Leave record (except absence without leave (AWOL) (consultation with HCTM/CPE/PM required). This includes references to FMLA and extensive leave for medical reasons;
10. Decisions or proposals concerning disciplinary action;
11. Reference to the use of the dissent channel, which results in an adverse evaluation of performance. However, expressions of dissenting views on policy which are outside the dissent channel and which raise substantive questions of judgment relative to the FS Skills Matrix or SFS Skills Model, as appropriate, may be discussed in an evaluation, with specific instances cited;
12. Negative or derogatory discussion of another employee's performance; and
13. Reference to or identification of a disability (that is, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or a record of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, or the perception that an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity) or other medical condition or association with an individual who has a disability.

D. Guidance for PSBs Review of Annual Evaluation Forms (AEFs)

Successful demonstration of performance meeting the Foreign Service and, as appropriate, Senior Foreign Service skill standards and the fulfillment of annual work objectives are the keys to retention and advancement. Failure to achieve work objectives and/or skills standards is evidence that an employee is failing to meet the standards of his or her class.

1. Achievement of Work Objectives

When reviewing an employee's performance, the PSB is to review only the employee's current AEF. The PSB must determine whether the employee met, exceeded, or did not meet the work objectives. In performing this task, the PSB shall determine whether the work objectives established in the AEF were within the control of the employee and whether they were commensurate with the employee's personal grade. The PSB **must** not use as a basis for determining that an employee did not meet the standards of his or her class if an employee's failure to meet a work objective was based on work objectives which were beyond the employee's control or if the work objectives were not commensurate with the employee's personal grade.

2. Foreign Service Skills Matrix and the Senior Foreign Service Skills Model

After determining that an employee has met his or her work objectives, the PSB reviews an employee's current AEF and determine whether the employee met, exceeded or did not meet the skills standards of the class. In performing this task, the PSB refers to the FS Skills Matrix (for FS-01s and below) and, for SFS employees, the SFS Skills Model. The FS Skills Matrix and the SFS Skills Model establish the skills standards by which the employees in those categories are expected to perform. All FS employees shall be evaluated on each of the four FS skill areas and all SFS employees **are** evaluated on each of their 3 core skill areas. The FS and SFS skill areas are further defined in terms of key characteristics, into which the Agency's core values of **passion for mission, excellence, integrity, respect, empowerment, inclusion and commitment to learning** have been integrated.

The skills areas and sub-skills for the FS are as follows:

- a. Resource Management
 - Budgeting and Financial Management
 - Human Resource Management
 - Procurement and Contract/Grant Management
 - Asset Management

- b. Leadership
 - Direction and Vision
 - Consensus Building
 - Motivation and empowerment
 - Staff Development
 - Cultural Sensitivity and Respect for Diversity

- c. Technical and Analytical Skills
 - Professional Expertise
 - USAID Values and Business Processes
 - Gathering Analysis, and Problem Solving -- including Knowledge Management
 - Customer Service

- d. Teamwork and Professionalism
 - Communication
 - Professional Conduct
 - Adaptability and Flexibility
 - Cultural Sensitivity and Respect for Diversity
 - Diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity, Knowledge and implementation

The core skills areas and sub-skills for the SFS are as follows:

- a. Leadership
 - Strategic Vision
 - Building coalitions and partnerships
 - Political astuteness
 - Credibility
 - Values and Seeks Diversity

- b. Management for Results
 - Accountability for results
 - Substantive knowledge
 - Problem solving

- c. Team Building and Interpersonal Skills
 - Team building
 - Developing others
 - Exhibiting integrity and honest
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Communication

After reviewing an employee's AEF, the PSB is to determine whether the employee is performing to the skill standards established in the FS Skills Matrix or SFS Skills Model, as appropriate, which are discussed in the evaluation.

E. Decision Rule

The decisions of the Board will be by majority vote. These decisions shall be communicated in writing, along with statements justifying such Board decisions, to the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO).

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